1:Wilson-E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



for his own son whom he begot saying: "He is my own flesh and blood", then the men of the village will pass judgement.'

This 'breath' is thought also to fall on a chief who is harsh towards his people, or who acts unconstitutionally, as in refusing to make a 'coming out' ceremony for his sons when his village headmen advise him; and it falls on a village headman who treats a junior in office unfairly, or is overbearing to his men. Both pagan and Christian informants insisted that fear of 'the breath of men' was a powerful sanction in the traditional system against arbitrary rule. Asagene, a Christian deacon, himself raised the subject one day and said: 'Headmen and chiefs—pagans—would be hard on their people and seize their goods if they (the headmen and chiefs) did not fear witchcraft. Witchcraft is like God to them.'

At every point the solidarity of the village is emphasized; the neighbours themselves are held to be insulted by the bad behaviour of a son—'their son'—to one of their fellows, or by a woman 'soiling their son', or by an heir failing to recognize their concern in the inheritance of a deceased fellow. For example, Mwakanyamale had begotten no child for ten years, and this was attributed to the fact that, after quarrelling with his elder brother and refusing to attend his funeral, he had not admitted his fault to the men of the village when he came back and killed a cow. His impotence was attributed to their curse.

As we have seen, recovery is thought to depend (i) upon the wrong-doer reforming and providing the men of the village, which is angry, with a bull or beer for a feast, acknowledging guilt as he does so; and (ii) upon the men of the village admitting their anger and responsibility for his illness, and expressing good will. 'If a daughter-in-law should have looked on her father-in-law by mistake she makes beer and sends it to her father-in-law. He calls his friends and admits: "Indeed I was angry with her for she looked at me", and the others say: "Yes, indeed, let her child get fat".' (*vide* pp. 235-6).

It may well be asked, is there any objective reality at the root of this belief in 'the breath of men'? Does the wrong-doer, fearing his neighbours, really become paralysed or impotent? It is possible that a sinner may sometimes develop these symptoms as the result of fear. We do not know, what is certain is that impotence, sterility, lingering illnesses including paralysis, and sickly

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



children, are not uncommon; that the penalty of sin is believed often to be delayed, and an illness may be attributed to a wrong committed many years previously; and lastly, that the victim of retribution may be one of several individuals. Parents are thought to be punished by the sickness of their children as well as in their own persons; in a case of sexual transgression it may be either partner who suffers; in the case of a neglected death ritual it may be either the heir or the widow on whose behalf it should have been performed (cf. Document, pp. 106, 236–7). When a woman bears a child after her son is married to a girl who has reached puberty, it is thought that she may fall ill herself, or her husband may be cursed 'because he had agreed to his son marrying a grown girl before the son's mother had grown old'; or the son may have no children because he eloped with his wife, or has 'married a grown girl when his father had only agreed that he should be betrothed to a little girl'.

A lively fear of witchcraft and of the 'breath of men' is inculcated in Nyakyusa children when quite young. Mwaikambo, a Christian, explained that boys learn about witchcraft from their senior play-mates when they are out herding, and in the hut at night in the boys' village, when tales are told. 'Then one fears in one's stomach and thinks: "Father! perhaps I, also, will be eaten by witches."' Ambilikile, another Christian informant, confirmed this, saying: 'We learn about witches from comments on cases of sickness, and from tales. When someone has died people say: "He was a witch, we found a python." Or perhaps of another it is said that "the witches had eaten him". In these tales the witches are said to have eaten people, or speared them, by means of witchcraft, so that the victim dies. We are also told how the witches fight in the power of witchcraft with their fellows from other villages, and how they fly on their pythons. What we hear always makes witchcraft awe-inspiring. I feared it very much.'

We had ample evidence that for most Nyakyusa the fear of witchcraft and of 'the breath of men' continues throughout life, and that it directly affects behaviour. It is, perhaps, the main sanction for moral behaviour within the village.

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa

## 12. INHERITANCE OF WITCHCRAFT

*Busilile (elderly pagan man).*

Question: 'How does a mother give her child witchcraft? How does a father give a child witchcraft?' 754 841

'It starts when a woman is menstruating; then she begins to give a child her cunning (*ubugalagale*). It is said that when a woman is menstruating she should avoid certain things (*ukutile*), particularly she should not pass behind people. For when a woman is menstruating a child has begun in her belly. People know that a certain woman is cunning when they see that she does not avoid people at certain times. Then they say: "Friends, this woman is spoiling the child. Why does she not observe the avoidances? Look, we have seen that she is fruitful (meaning that she is menstruating)." For it is that dirt which creates witchcraft. When a woman does not avoid, then she gives the child in her belly witchcraft. It is from this that witchcraft really comes. When a woman is not cunning, then she always observes the avoidance taboos; she does not go about anyhow. From of old it has been thought important that a menstruating woman should observe certain avoidances. A woman avoids certain things because she fears to spoil the child in her belly. When a woman does not avoid these things, the dirt, that is to say the menstrual blood, goes to where the child is. That is how she spoils the child. On this account women fear to go about anyhow, to pass behind people; they fear those medicines with which we men smear our bodies, all those for good fortune and others. Especially they fear a fierce medicine, that of fire. For there is a medicine with which some people smear themselves which causes a person to faint if the user strikes him once with the flat of his hand. It is this medicine which spoils the child in the belly of a menstruating woman if she passes behind a man. This is the lineage of witchcraft. It comes especially from this, from that dirty little thing (i.e. woman) who does not observe the avoidance rules. Hence, we say she has given her child witchcraft.

'A father gives his child witchcraft because the man's blood goes into the woman, for a woman is a pocket.' [942]

Ntulanongwe confirmed the above statement of the origin of witchcraft, and explained:

'A woman does not menstruate when she is pregnant, but some menstrual blood remains in her, which may "spoil" her. We all think that when a woman is menstruating some of the blood remains in her

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



woman has been angry with her husband, and perhaps quarrelled with him, and has sworn at her husband by "the things" (i.e. the sex organs) of his mother, or perhaps his father, the child she bears will fall sick with *ngozo*. It becomes very thin and does not grow. The disease is recognized when a child is very ill from infancy, and it is very thin but does not die. Then they say it is *ngozo*. Sometimes they inquire of a diviner and the diviner reveals that it is ill of *ngozo*.

"I remember a certain woman who was married to a man, Akenyenbe. This man had married two wives, and she of whom I speak was the third. This woman was very proud (*nemutinga fijo*) and was constantly quarrelling with her husband and her co-wives. When she quarrelled with her husband he got angry and beat her. Then she swore at him horribly, about "the things" of his mother or father. She said: "You! Go and sc of your father! Go and sc of your mother!" Then this woman bore a girl child and when it had grown a little it became very ill. It was very ill for a whole year. When it began to recover she quarrelled again with her husband and swore at him insultingly, and the child got ill again. So her husband (the father of the child) and she went to inquire of a diviner. The divination revealed *ngozo*. It said: "Your wife has sworn at you about the things of your mother when you were quarrelling." When they got home the husband drove his wife away, saying: "Go to your father!" When she got home the woman told her father everything and he took millet and gave it to her to make beer with which to pay. So she brewed beer and brought it to her husband, saying: "I did wrong, my husband." Her husband called his fellows and they all drank the beer and expressed their anger (*ukwijaja*) and said: "May the child recover and grow well!"

"This happened when I was 13 or 14 years old. The girl (who was ill) is still alive; her body shows signs of not having grown properly.

"The disease comes from "the breath of men" because those insults were made publicly and others heard them. I do not think anything would happen if the insults were private, I am not sure."

*A curse of neighbours for neglect of rituals.*
*Lupembwile (young Christian man).*

"If I do not do the (death) ritual properly for my father the death of my children is due to the curse against me, the dispute with relatives and the curse of people—non-relatives (*nsupwa nkukwesa, chigwa nkumulu*).

"Sometimes the villagers (*umuhwesa*) bind a man's loins so that he cannot beget children with his wife. They are both sterile. If we knock

1:Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1951 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



male, the doctor in Selya, is a case of this. He had quarrelled with his elder brother and did not come to bury him. Later he came and killed a cow, but did not tell the men of the village (*amafumu*) properly, and they were angry, and so for the last ten years he has had no child. His wives do not conceive at all. That is due to the curse of men (*ibipuno bya bantu*)."

*A curse for 'soiling a man'.*
*Angunilwike* (*young Christian man*).

*Angunilwike* cited a case of sterility attributed to *ibipuno* because a woman had 'soiled' a man.

She had run away three times with X. Finally her husband forced X to eat her filth and drink her urine. X was very ill but recovered. She bore no further children on her return to her husband. She went to Lyandolilo (the informant's mother) for medicine but the latter said she could not help as it was *ibipuno*. Her neighbours were shocked because she had "soiled the child of someone". Also the neighbours of X's father were shocked. Their "breath" takes effect because she visits frequently in their village, going to see a grandparent. They say: "This is the woman who soiled our child."

N.B.—It is the woman who is held to have suffered, not her husband or X.

*A curse due to incest.*
*Gwasi* (*young Christian man*).

"A, son of B (a chief), made love to his father's sister X. X's husband, C, had married (*alwendwile*) a full sister, Y, of A. A lay with X. A had syphilis and X and her husband C both fell sick of it. C asked X where the disease came from. She accused A. C complained to B. B was very angry and all men were astonished at it. It is forbidden. How could he have intercourse with his mother, the sister of his father! B took four of A's cows and gave them to C. People cursed (*alogwana*) A, who was very ill for two years. His eye came out of its socket. He went to a mission hospital.

"The villagers (*amafumu*) gathered at B's and said: "This sickness of A is because of that case of his when he lay with X. It is because of that he is sick." So B sent to A and told him to bring four cows, which he did. B called his people and brothers and sisters and said: "Here your child." They swore and swore at him, and they caught hold of the woman and swore, saying: "How did you agree to sleep with your

L. Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F917 Ngonde F917
Nyakyusa
Golya, Ku kigonde.



identification of the mourners with the corpse and the separation of the shade from both of them. 'What they do to the participants they do to the deceased. . . . If they are not cleansed he is still unclean. . . . We throw away the corpse, the contamination of death, into the river . . . we drive the shade away off our bodies to join his fellows . . . we separate the corpse and the shade.' Thirdly, bringing back the shade as a beneficent spirit into the home. 'In the ritual we tell the shade to go away and join his fellows, and then to come back with them and warm himself by the fire in our house. . . . At first the shade is in *our* bodies, we cast him out . . . at first it is as if we were still holding the corpse in our arms, but we threw the corpse away into the river . . . the shade we bring back into our house.'

Fourthly, a mirroring of the actions of a madman in eating excrement as a prophylactic against behaviour of that sort. The dead, if not separated from the living, bring madness upon them, and simulating madness is a protection against it.

Fifthly, the corpse and faeces are identified: 'The corpse is filth, it is excrement. And so when a madman for whom they have not performed the ritual eats filth that is the corpse, he is still holding it, they have not done the ritual for him.'

Sixthly, the shades are identified with women and seeds and their control over potency and fertility is recognized. The Nyakyusa think that they are always present in sexual intercourse, and symbols of sexual intercourse are interpreted as a means of driving out the shade from the participants' bodies.

Seventhly, 'the food which he loved' is symbolically 'given to the shade' of the man who has just died and he is urged to be satisfied: 'You, shade, do not think there was little food at your ritual. . . . The food which we have eaten you have eaten . . . do not create hunger.'

Eighthly, the shade is acknowledged as a kinsman by eating with him food and beer mixed with *depfu*—the symbol of agnatic kinship—before he is driven away.

Lastly, a dead man is formally replaced by his heir, a woman by her sister or her brother's daughter.

These conceptions are expressed in the following texts which are given as they were recorded by Godfrey Wilson. No attempt has been made to systematize Kaulile's or Mwandisi's arguments, but the statements made during numerous sessions have been placed in sequence, and are supported only by dots.

2: Wilson E-S (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17

Nyakyusa
Selga, MaNgonde



lentil is the shade, the millet is the shade, the pumpkin-seed is the shade. The doctor takes them away home and eats them, that means that the shades have gone away. The words they say: 'Ours, ours! We marvel at the thing!' mean: 'The semen is ours, the shades have supported him, they have given us the semen, they have not bound it.' For if the shades are angry they bind him and the semen does not come. . . . If the heir and his dead father (or brother) were on bad terms then, although the ritual is correctly done, yet still the shades will bind his semen at the end of the ritual. Fertility (*ubupe*) does not belong to the shades but to Kyala, but if the shade is angry he binds it.

There are three symbols: the banana is the corpse and the seed is the shade. It is the filth which madmen catch hold of, it is the faeces which they eat. And the banana is the body of the man and the seed is his semen. Eating is sexual intercourse. It is this he has done during his lifetime. It is to send him away and say that we are about to put another in his homestead. It is the body and semen of him who has died. Also when a woman has died the husband eats . . . it [the banana and seed] is what we did. . . .

The seed is the shade, and it is the blood for creating a person [i.e. the semen] because the shade and the semen are brothers.'

Yes, they are intermingled, all are together in the ritual: the corpse, and the shade, and the body of the man [i.e. his penis] and the blood [semen] and the filth of madness; all are intermingled. You understand, Mwaipaja (G. W.), you are a priest now, you are a real priest. . . .

When they shake up the millet and lentils and pumpkin-seeds at the home where he has finish d coitus with the women it also has a double symbolism (*kuja ku ifyuma ifili*): the seed is the blood [semen]—Ours, ours—and it is the shade who has gone. Also at puberty it is like this. . . .

Those who say the *ikipishi* is one and the same for birth, puberty and the death ritual are right. It is one only. . . . The *ikipishi* is our blood, it is kept in the house of the senior wife. It pertains both to men and to the shades, for when we marry we do a ritual with it, so the shade says: 'I have eaten it during my life, I was born with it (for it went into his stomach), I married a woman with it (we wash and shave our hair with it at marriage), now that I am dead they perform the ritual with it.' It is one and the same. The *ikipishi* is our intention.[a] It is one and the same in all lineages.

One day at a funeral roasted bananas were brought. A man started scraping the ash off his with a spear. Kaitilo asked him: 'Do you scrape bananas?' He answered: 'Yes, but if there were the fence in the house we would avoid doing so.'

[a] cf. Chilangwa: *umuswa*, *isyungu*: pumpkin-seed.
[b] *Ukuba kwa ishisho*: 'the intention of the lineage'; the large intention.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selya, Malipunde



764

QUESTION: The banana and the pumpkin-seeds?

MWANDISI: These are the ritual which we—I the man, and she the woman—perform at the end, they are the sexual intercourse. The pumpkin-seed and the lentil and the millet are the blood of the man, the banana is his procreative power (*mbeto jale*). The pumpkin-seed ritual is important—when we have finished it then I go to my wife and do not fear her, but Lubabelo begins. Before the pumpkin-seed ritual it is completely taboo.

QUESTION: And the beer?

MWANDISI: That is not important, but the pumpkin-seed ritual is. But when a man has died then his wife must not approach the heir until the beer ritual.

QUESTION: Then the lust for copulation always comes from the shades?

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MWANDISI: Yes, desire comes from the shades. If they are angry you are impotent and cannot beget a child; and sometimes also you are impotent because the umbilical cord (*ululolo*) has fallen on your mother.

MWANDISI'S WIFE: When my husband says in his heart: 'I shall go to my wife', that comes from the shades.

QUESTION: The umbilical cord?

MWANDISI'S WIFE: It is completely taboo for it to fall on the loins, then the child will not develop, it will be sterile and not bear (or beget) a child. And the mother herself will not bear again, she will not conceive again. . . . A woman cries a great deal with the pain in her belly until the cord comes away: when it has come away then she is filled with wonder and does not cry.[1]

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MWANDISI: Pumpkin-seeds are used by us and the people of Selya, the Kukwe perform the ritual with beans, and the people of Ngonde with fish and beer. . . .

QUESTION: Why do the heir and wife appear to refuse when caught in the ritual?

MWANDISI: Because someone has died. Should they rejoice therefore? If they rejoice it seems as if they wished their relative to die.

QUESTION: Do they fear the dead will harm them if they appear to rejoice?

MWANDISI: No, they fear those above [i.e. the living] lest they laugh at them. They are ashamed. But sometimes a woman really refuses. She fights and fights, and struggles and struggles, and says: 'No.' Her friends (the women) hit her and put her in the house, then when she has come out of the house she runs off, she flees.

QUESTION: The ashes and the *ilisyalungufwa* creeper?

MWANDISI: They are signs of mourning, they give them to the

[1] The umbilical cord, *ululolo*, is literally the 'cord of weeping'.

*Ilyakyusa*
*Galya, Malgtsola*

769 769 *Ilimba kalyasi mapumbulo ku kuyaka, ku kupitila akanyaka tukulukaga: kanga tukanyagwila tukulaga ilyigili? Akanyaka ku kukaulaga kilajamo; paja kanga tumulila pa kumbila mumbu. Lali kikwamukaya kanji kakaya naku kwiita?*)

●142 What we do comes from the shades and from Kyala himself. The
131 blood is theirs and his together. Those who create (*akukumba*) a child say: 'I am just eating at a woman,' but Kyala creates a child! If Kyala and the shades do not 'cook' [i.e. do not cause desire] you will do nothing, the penis is flaccid, but if Kyala has 'cooked' then you really do something, your heart (*ukumbulo*) is full of desire. Always the shades are there and we drive them away, they are there and we drive them away. . . .

775 A shade is resurrected in the body of his child (*Umyuke ilunyuka kilo mumbili yaso mumwile*). . . .

764 Passing the basket of pumpkin-seeds, millet, and lentils between the
775 legs and on to the head and throwing to one side means: 'Here between the legs there is work, may they go out in innocence, and from the head where we dream, may they go out also.' Because in the ritual we say: 'Let them come into the body' as first, then we drive them away. Rubbing ourselves in the earth and passing millet between the legs means: 'May they come';* throwing millet and so on to one side it is to drive them away, that they may go out.

Questioner: Which shade do you drive away?

Informant: He who has just died, we drive him away.

Questioner: What about the first ancestor?

Informant: He is there at their place [the place of the shades], we drove him away long ago, he just receives him [the newly deceased].

Questioner: Why the pumpkin-seeds in the basket?

Informant: It is the omens (*ukulanga*) for begetting children. . . .

Questioner: Do the shades always come when a man dies?

Informant: Yes, they always come, they receive their fellow. Yes, even though he has died from sorcery they come and receive him, and even though he has died from witchcraft they come, the shades receive him, and if it is from illness he has died they also come. There is no
765 death without the shades, they always come to receive their fellow.

When the witches have 'eaten' someone the shades come to receive
764 him. No, the witches eat him alone, but the shades receive him. Some-
775 one may get up in the morning and say: 'I dreamed they ate me and I
763 was with the shades!' Then he is about to die. Sometimes someone
123 dreams and says: 'In the night I was in the land of the shades with so-and-so, I left him there, I escaped myself and came home.' Then his friend is about to die.

766 If you do not perform the ritual you go mad (*kukyendaka ilighili*) or
775 perhaps you get very thin, and are unable to die, you are ailing and do

* I.e. the participants identify themselves with the deceased.

as in front, we men, and the woman is also roomed. If you have not the §32
shade in you (*shumpa anyuke*)', then you are sterile, you are impotent, 775
you do not copulate with women; we say that the shades have troubled
over you. Why do they not rouse him to go to women? He just looks at
them. Because the shade rouses within a man and says: 'Ha!' It rouses
a man to copulate with a woman. If it has troubled on him then it does
not rouse him; it is within him, it does not wish to come out.

Questioner: Why do you let the hair grow in the death ritual?

Mwanilemba: The hair is very important, it's very important. 764

Mwanilemba identified growing hair after spearing a man, and after the birth of twins and later shaving, with growing hair and shaving in the death ritual.

Questioner: So letting the hair grow at an ordinary death is part of the ritual?

Mwanilemba: It [the hair] is the corpse's. We have not yet driven him away. At the shaving we drive him off.

Syungu (wife of Mwanilemba) told me that stones were placed 764
between the ten, not only of the participants in the death ritual, 775
but also of a bride (*mwanga*)[a] and that the stones are children
(*mabwe ya bana*). The girl should bear six or ten children to her
husband.

'But', I said, 'at the death ritual you threw away the corpse, the shade.'

Syungu answered: 'Yes, it is so, children are born by the power [§42]•
of the shades (*mizuka ya kuyuke*).'

Mwanilemba himself, when asked about this, said: 'The stones are the shade, we throw him away so that when he has gone the girl may bear children.'

Dotson: When a girl does not bear children we say: 'Perhaps §42
the shades are angry, the husband has not finished giving marriage- 778
cattle.'

Questioner: And madness?

Dotson: If she goes mad we say, if we have not roomed her: 'We 778
have neglected the ritual, we have not roomed her!' The girl runs about 783
aimlessly, she smears herself with filth. But when we have roomed her
and she goes mad then we say: 'Perhaps Kyala has deserted us, as
nothing remains, we have roomed her.'

[a] He said both the phrases *shumpa kuyu anyuke* (to be without the shade) and *anyuke shumwinshi* (the shade breaks on him) for the same phenomenon.

[b] *Mwanga*: a girl who has reached puberty but has not yet borne a child, and undergoing the puberty-marriage ritual (*mwanga*).

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F317 Ngonde F317
Nyakyusa
Kafwa.



even fellowmen in the house. And as the inheritance, when I have inherited the women, they go to their own homes with a bull if I am wealthy, or perhaps three shillings. They go back to their fathers with the dirt on them—*ngonde!*

QUESTION: Where does the *ngonde* come from when you do not wear them?

MWAFULA: Kyala is startled and you gasp with *ngonde*, your breath is short.

QUESTION: Does the husband also go to his place?

MWAFULA: Yes, he always returns to his father's.

QUESTION: Why the two leaves representing a man and a woman at the hitting the ground and saying: '*Kuku, kuku*'?

MWAFULA: Because we are two [holding up two fingers], a man and a woman. Formerly when someone died or a bachelor (*sic*) took a leaf of the sweet banana and said: 'It is your wife.' They buried it with him, saying: 'Go to the land of the shades because you were never married.'

QUESTION: What does the mocking at shaving mean?

MWAFULA: It is one with stealing the plantain trees. We mock them meaning, may they escape, and not take rubbish from the rubbish heap. And at the shaving of the hair we drive him away, saying: 'Go to your fellows.' He has been alone, he was on the road, may he go.

Further the Chief admitted that the wearing of leaves and 242
bananas in the rituals of death and of puberty were symbols of 111
fertility (*lwangolo fye mbapa*); the plantain represents the penis, the sweet banana represents the clitoris, 'for in the old days they were leaves only, no cloths'. In the puberty ritual the wearing of leaves and bananas is the same. It is a sign of fertility: 'the ritual is now finished and the girl is someone's wife.'

Mwaijumbo, who provided the beer of inheritance for the ritual 273
of Njoka Nani, explained to us as he drank: 'We drink beer to 764
drive away our friend. It means that everything is finished: "Come to your house frequently now. It is finished! May the fathers [i.e. the other shades] receive him! May he not return! We have poured out this beer for you, it is finished."'

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FNH? Nyanda FNH?
Nyakyusa
Selya, Nsyngwale



again an acknowledgment of kinship. 'If she washed outside it would mean that she was not the daughter of her father.'

The two fresh leaves of plantain and sweet banana on which the officiant places her soiled bark-cloth, and on top of which she kneels to eat bananas are, as already stated, symbols of male and female. Everyone understood this. Fewer people were aware of the symbolism of eating the bananas, but Kasitile and one or two others were fully conscious of it and forthright in discussion. He said:

> At the 'putting her i.e.' (*ahaingwite*) the mothers-in-law bring a new bark-cloth and dress her in it; the old one is thrown away on the litter. They mix together bananas and *digobi* medicine which the mistress, Don't you understand? They coax her. The plantain is the symbol of the man, of his penis, we are coaxing her, may she 'cook well' for her husband [i.e. be proficient in intercourse], may she bear children. She sees on that bark-cloth which means may the blood go to make children, this is your husband. Eating is a symbol (*ibimupiki*) of sexual intercourse. She sees the plantain, meaning she has intercourse with her husband.

He connected this with the admonition at the end of the ritual. When she eats the bananas nothing is said, it is only implied, but after the drinking of beer they coach her, saying: "Look after your husband well; if you are sweeping the house and he catches hold of you don't be startled, accept him, and catch hold of him also. . . . Men when they do this begin children."

The second washing of the groom's, which is performed for every wife and not only for a senior one, is interpreted as a closing ritual. In the morning the officiant calls the husband and wife and says: 'Come and wash now and clean off the filth.'

Shaving is both a purification and a sign of the completion of the ritual. "The hair of a girl who has reached puberty is the filthiness of puberty, of the menstrual blood which she produces then. She throws it away." Mwakwitwinja and his wife said: "The shaving is to show that she has awakened to puberty (*ukudanda ubusungu*). During the ritual she did not shave. We perform the rite of shaving that she may begin to shave again, and to let her smear herself with brown ointment. It is like a burial. If a man's close relative dies he does not shave or wash." Mwalinja said: "The shaving is to show that the *ubusungu* ritual is finished."

Cleaning the litter which is 'filthy', contaminated with the menstrual blood of the girl, is also a symbol of purification. The washing in a leaf basin into which *digobi* medicine had been

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F'N17 Ngonde F'N17
Nyakyusa
Selgy, Hastings



child at her husband's.' Neglect to kill the bull may result in sterility. Mwamba, a middle-aged man, said:

If he officiates, the mothers of the girl, have not eaten, and the father also, the girl will not bear a child, those people are angry and the shades are angry, they (the shades) help them (the living). And if you do not perform the other customs of the letter the shades are angry, the fathers and the mothers. They say: 'What! Have you not created the child?'

Mwakisonde, the doctor, explained:

When a woman conceives and has a miscarriage, it is ninde, the shades are angry. Perhaps if we have not killed the bull of puberty we buy one. The shades are angry, saying: 'Why have we not received a libation of blood poured on the ground for our grandchild? They have done wrong towards us, we who created them.' The girl does not bear a child because pouring out the blood of a beast (bull or cow) is to pray (ukwa ililopa fye wanke ku lusopesi).

Mwakabela, our neighbour, said:

If we have not eaten the bull of puberty, they lewitch us (kilundigwe), the child does not bear a child. Our fellows in the lineage lewitch us, they say: 'We have not eaten the puberty meat.' Then, later on, the husband brings the bull and we eat, and the (je mwapi nsua) we throw to the banana grove, and we pray and pray and the girl conceives.

The fertility of the girl is believed to depend upon driving away the shade of her father's lineage from her body. We have already quoted (p. 98) the prayer: 'There is the meat! I have eaten the food of others, come eat a little, may she bear a child at her husband's.' Mwasilinga explained this conception:

Those of old said: 'We drive away Kyala and the shades, may she bear a her husband's.' She moves to others, to a different lineage. When that lineage rise up from the dead (kipukaga dilolo lilo). If we do not treat the girl she will not bear a child at her husband's.

To understand this it is necessary to understand the Nyakyusa theory of conception. It is held that sexual desire in both men and women comes from Kyala and the shades, and without their support a man is impotent, a woman barren. Kasitile was quite explicit on the matter:

Kyala is in the belly. He causes the blood of a woman which forms a child to flow and the blood of the man also. We say that Kyala is in the belly; he watches over us at the conception of a child. But our fathers,

2: Wilson E-5 (1936-1938)1937 F'317 Ngonde F'317
Nyakyusa
Selp, Malawi



Mwakanjiki and his fellows, said that Lwembe is there (in the belly), they did not speak of Kyala. Did you not hear at Lubaga?" What did I ask for?

G. W.: You asked for a child!

Kaitila: Yes, I asked for a child. The menstrual blood is that which we discharge when lying together. I, the man, discharge, and the woman also discharges. If Kyala does not support us, then that blood degenerates, it becomes blood which flows out at the period.

G. W.: But the girl has periods before intercourse?

Kaitila: Yes, indeed, that is her blood. Does a woman not discharge? If she sleeps alone, as a bachelor, her blood just flows out, it does not create a child. In intercourse we try to discharge together. If I see that the woman is gasping I try to discharge with her. If I am gasping and wish to discharge, I wait for the woman. Yes, there is choice. We are all like that. But our fathers feared that if the woman discharges first she will bear a girl, and if I, the man, discharge first she will bear a boy! The shades of her fathers are there in the body of a girl, and we drive them away. It is like the case of a widow; the situations are just alike. We treat the girl and say: 'Now the woman is free.' At the outing of the hall we come to say: 'You shade, be present and look upon us. This matter is for you to go away a little. May she bear children.'[1]

G. W.: So if the shade is in the girl she cannot bear children?

Kaitila: What can the shade go away with if you do not pray?

Question: What happens if she washes and performs all the ritual with a man, a husband, and then leaves him, without having had full intercourse, for another man?

Kaitila: It does not matter. She is freed from the lineage of her father, she has moved to another lineage, so they do not count her again. (*She wanders, shade abides the game, animis abides things, papapa kutilantendinga longi.*)

On another occasion Kaitila said that intercourse took place 'when Kyala and the shades have gathered there. They come out to the woman and her belly sprouts [i.e. she conceives].'

Kaitila was not offering a personal interpretation when he talked about conception. Conversations with a number of people showed that the ideas he put forward were generally held. Mwandisi, the old blind chief, when asked where the blood to beget children came from, replied:

It is from him who makes us all do things, Kyala and the shades together.

[1] Rituals are performed on behalf of the country at Lubaga. Kaitila was a hereditary priest. See *Communal Rituals among the Nyakyusa* (forthcoming).

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Selig.Mc.Ngonde



[841] 773 Question: *And women?*

Answer: When the diadoi are angry a woman is constantly miscarrying and does not bear a child; if they are not angry she conceives.

[842] 773 *And on another occasion he said:*

[843] 773 Lust comes from the diadoi; if they are angry with you you are impotent; you cannot beget a child.

His wife added: 'My husband says in his heart: "Let me go to my wife." It is the diadoi that make him.'

One informant after another mentioned both Kyala (or Lwembe) *and* the diadoi as being present in intercourse. Mwakisondo, after talking of miscarriages being due to the anger of the diadoi, went on:

[845] Kyala has created the bowel of diadoi. If a man is impotent we say Kyala has not given him breath to beget a child.

Kasaya: If my child runs off with a man, whether a stranger or her husband, before she has reached puberty and I continue angry, if Kyala has helped me she does not bear a child. Then it is said 'her father was angry'. They come to me bringing the remaining marriage-cattle and I pray and she bears a child.

Question: If the husband asked for his property and disbowered her before puberty?

Kasaya: There is no case, it was all right, even long ago. I said: 'Finish paying the cattle.' Perhaps he begged me, saying: 'I am poor, Father,' and I was satisfied.

[846] 773 No pagan questions the power of the diadoi over fertility, and this power is believed to be exercised by the mother's lineage, as well as that of the father. Angonitwike, the Christian, said:

[847] The pagans fear that if they do not perform the puberty ritual when a girl reaches puberty, she will dry up. The blood will not come again even though she is not pregnant. Then, if her periods do not come for two or three months, like this, she will never bear a child. They say the diadoi are angry and have bound her fertility. And if she does not reach puberty at all, if consummation does not begin, her father prays in the heavens grove, saying: 'You, fathers, what are you angry about?' And if the girl's mother's brother is angry on account of cattle—perhaps her father has not given marriage-cattle properly for her mother—for, the mother's brother, binds a strip of the liver (*ulyilundo*) from her puberty ritual in the hut, then the girl will not bear a child. Inquiry is made of a diviner who says: 'The mother's brother has bound her.' The father takes a vow to him and says: 'I am sorry, I have done wrong, I

2: Wilson K-5 (1934-1938)1957 F'017 Ngonde F'017
Nyakyusa
Colyn, Ma Ngonde



have thought of it now, this is the cow.' Then, in the evening, the mother's brother blows out water in the banana grove and prays much to the fathers. And when he has prayed he says: 'Send the girl to a doctor to drink medicine.' Then the girl bears a child. The pagans say of us Christians when we have children without performing the ritual: 'You have a medicine, you are baptized with a medicine.'

Mwakibelo confirmed that the mother's brother, like the father, may prevent a girl bearing a child.

Yes, it is so, if I do not give marriage-cattle for my wife our child will not bear. We go to divine and the oracle-caster told of my wife saying that the fathers are angry. We ask what they are angry about, and the answer is 'cattle'. Then I, the father of the girl, go with a cow and leave it and return. My wife and daughter remain there. They pray and pray and the girl conceives.

It is clear, therefore, that the ancestors are present in intercourse and control conception. At marriage the *ilimbo* of her father must 'move aside a little' so that the bride may conceive, and she herself becomes dangerous to her mother (and in a lesser degree to her father) because she has mingled her blood with that of another lineage. Mingling the blood of different lineages is dangerous and a bride can safely meet her mother only after performing a ritual in which her parents, as well as herself, become 'one flesh' with her husband. 'When a bride brings a hen and millet to her mother it is to say: "Mother, I have wiped my husband's genitals, I have grown up."' All our informants were agreed that the *ilitalaga* or *ilibala* (both words are used) is to safeguard the mother's health, particularly to prevent her suffering from diarrhoea. Mwandisi's statement was clear:

In the puberty ritual, when a bride has come from her husband, having lain with him, she carries hold of a little millet and a fowl without reading 'smell' and carries them to her mother. The mother sees it with the fowl that her belly may be free. If the daughter does not bring these things, then, when she drinks from the same calabash as her mother, she overcomes her mother, who has diarrhoea. Yes, the illness comes from the *ilimbo* because she has come her from the bed. . . . This diarrhoea comes from the belly when those below are angry and those above also. They say: 'The mother has overstepped the child' or 'The child has overstepped the mother'. If a girl has reached puberty we, the parents, do not come together until she has gone to her husband and lain with him. If we have intercourse we

2: Wilson E-S (1934-1936)1937 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Kaf.ut



between them. These two remain with the bride all through the period of seclusion, never leaving her, but the other maids may come and go if called away to perform other duties.

From the onset of menstruation until the ritual washing a girl may neither cross a stream nor wash; after it she crosses streams and washes her hands and feet, but does not yet bathe her whole body. She sleeps on the litter with her companions for about a month and 'by day and by night the young men sing songs with the girls. . . . The play in the puberty hut resembles adultery—we call it love-making (ubugonjwe).' 'The groom visits his bride on the litter.' 'Gifts of beer and firewood are brought by the bride's mothers (abaumbukisi) and, after her second period has passed, the rite of ukunya (bringing out) is performed.'

The litter is swept out and burnt. Bride and groom are shaved and go separately to bathe. 'The women carry the girl and the man's fellows carry him.' The girl is examined to prove her virginity and the women return with her rejoicing, and make her and her husband run in and out of the doorway of a hut over which they pour water. Then follow the admonitions.

At the ukunya (bringing out) rite the officiants drink a special brewing of beer made in the following fashion: the chief officiant puts a little millet, mixed with powdered medicine, into a flat winnowing basket, makes the bride stand in it and, loosening her bark-cloth soiled by first menstruation, lets it fall into the millet.[1] Then she shells and burns it, lest an enemy, wishing to prevent the bride conceiving, should get hold of it. The bride's fresh bark-cloth is sprinkled with medicines to make her 'heavy', the sides of the old one are treated with medicines to ensure her fertility, and the millet is put to soak and brewed into beer in the hut in which she has secluded on the litter.

We saw the Kaiser ukunya rite performed only once. The girl, a daughter of a chief, was not yet married or betrothed, so there was no groom to play his part, and the whole ritual was carried out in her father's homestead, her own mother going through it with her. She herself appeared more reluctant, and there were various modifications due to the presence of new ideas. We quote the account to show the manner of washing, and of entering and leaving the hut—rites which were described in detail by a number of informants, and which are characteristic of the Kaiser ritual cycle.

[1] It was not made clear by Kaiser informants exactly what this happened.

J. Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 F'017 Ngonde F'017
Nyakyusa
Kukwe



(from under the bed) in the morning it has the filth of intercourse on it, then the father and mother should eat it. If this is not done they will fall ill with diarrhoea. If the hen is taken alive some eat it and others do not."

After discussing this rite Mwanilonda went on:

You know, also, that when a girl has gone through the puberty ritual at her husband's she must not take firewood from her mother's relhem (hearth) until she is obviously pregnant. Before then, while she is lying with her husband, she must not. We say: 'How can you take your mother's firewood when you are sleeping with your husband?' It is just the same whether the mother is old or young. If the bride goes through the ritual without sleeping with her husband that is all right; it is when she begins to sleep with him that she begins to avoid her mother's hearth. At that time I, the father, may marry her mother and sleep with her, but with some reservation. I must not make her pregnant. The daughter must begin. As soon as she is pregnant then we parents can begin to conceive a child again. If we do so before our daughter, then she will never bear a child at all, and others will say: 'How could you overstep your daughter?'

Avoidance between father-in-law and daughter-in-law is observed as in Selya, but is slightly less strict.

(3) *The ritual purpose and symbolism*

As has already been indicated, the symbolism of the Kukwe ritual of puberty is similar to that of Selya. The same actions are interpreted in exactly the same way and, where actions differ somewhat, they are still interpreted as expressing the same general conceptions. For example, the Kukwe bride and groom make love together by friction and not partridge cooked on it, whereas a bride in Selya eats bananas with powdered medicine, but both actions are symbols of sexual intercourse. Both in Selya and in Kukwe country the bride is purified and, as part of the process of purification, the shade of her father's lineage is driven from her body; but only among the Kukwe is this symbolized by sitting in a running stream and allowing the water to wash away pebbles from between her fingers and toes.

That there may be no doubt about the interpretation of the Kukwe ritual we again quote a number of statements by Nyakyusa informants. These refer specifically to the Kukwe form of the puberty ritual.

Chief Pandenje's wives, discussing the ritual together, were em-

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa
Kakoe



come him, it does not wish to come out. And although the faeces are from they are the corpse. Because we bury a corpse underground, and faeces also go underground to the shades. They disappear by night, that is the shade. If someone excretes faeces and finds it in the grass we say: 'The shade has caught hold of him.'

Question: Are faeces associated with sexual intercourse?

Mwanamtama: Yes, the shade does both things, he causes diarrhoea and sexual intercourse. If you defaecate firm stools that is not the shade, that is the food we eat, but watery diarrhoea which troubles you repeatedly at night—that is the shade. If you have diarrhoea for three days people say: 'The shades have homosexed you' or 'The shade has caught hold of you.'

Question: Madness?

Mwanamtama: That is the shade because it says: 'Since you have me in your belly, and they have not treated you, I cause this—these faeces are the corpse. A madman defaecates and catches hold of his faeces, perhaps he eats them, perhaps he binds it up in the grass and catches hold of it. It is the corpse.'

Kakoe, the doctor, also interpreted the puberty ritual as being, in one aspect, the transference of a girl from her father's group to her husband's and, like Kanjile and Mwanamtama, he identified sexual desire and perversy with the shades. He said:

*At puberty a girl has left her father's and has gone to others; if she dies he to whom she has gone buries her.*

Question: Where does the blood of a woman come from?

Kakoe: If the girl is unmarried, from her shades; they create her blood, but in the ritual we treat her so that she moves to my place, she comes to my shades; the blood of a married woman is created by my shades and hers together. *And the 'blood' of a man [i.e. semen] also comes from the shades.*

Question: Do the shades reveal themselves at birth?

Kakoe: Yes, because if I am angry or my father is angry I do not beget a child, but when he has prayed I do so. If I am angry with the woman and she has caught hold of me and injured me, then we do not have a child. The ordeal (*mwafi*) convicts the woman. She goes to her father who prays. Then we have a child.

Question: Where does the power to bear and beget children come from?

Kakoe: From the shades, you have the shades in your belly. If they are not there you are all like women in the house, you cannot have an erection, but when the shades work, you have an erection.

Question: Whose shades are present at intercourse?

Kakoe: Mine, the man's and the woman's, we both have them,

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F7617 Ngonde F7617
Nyakyusa
Kukuti



blood of another lineage mingles with hers, but it has not reached her mother because they have not met. To drink water together from one calabash is to meet. Then the mother has diarrhoea because her body is not accustomed to the blood of another lineage. To have diarrhoea is to go bad, to engal (*ukwenga*) the filth. The *ifilubo* of the fowl is the body of the groom which mingles with the body of the girl's parents that they may be one blood with him.

Thus, not only husband and wife, but also parents and son-in-law become one flesh.

As in Safwa, a direct connection is made between the parents receiving a bull for the bride's virginity, and her bearing a child to her husband. Mwasilimbo explained: 'Kyala together with the shades have made the girl grow up. If the girl runs off with her husband and I, the father, have not received cattle, then the earth is angry, the shades say: "We shall see if she will flourish there." Then the girl does not conceive, and the diviner says: "The shades are angry." The groom's people bring cattle, then I, the father, pray for my child and she conceives, her belly swells.'

2: W11son E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F917 Ngonde F917 Nyakyusa

## CHAPTER V

# THE RITUAL OF BIRTH*

942 Kyala (or Lwembe) and the shades create desire in men and women and control conception; when the shades are angry women do not conceive—this is one of the main tenets of pagan Nyakyusa cosmology, and it is combined with a limited knowledge of physiology. It is clearly understood that conception cannot take place without intercourse, and that gestation in human beings lasts for nine months, but it is believed that repeated intercourse is necessary for conception, and formerly, if a man found his wife pregnant after having lain with her only once, he accused her of adultery.

[47]

(a) *Taboos of procreation*

[51] The procreation of children is an ultimate value of Nyakyusa society and the accepted end of marriage, but it is regarded as dangerous under certain conditions and is hedged about with taboos. These are enforced so that both parents and children may be healthy; a breach of them is thought to result in violent diarrhoea, as well as monstrously swollen legs and weakness in men, general debility in children, and miscarriage or an excessive menstrual flow in women. The onus of observing them falls primarily on women, though their husbands must also cooperate, and a breach of taboo is treated as immoral, for it is believed to endanger the life, or health, or property of others.

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[57] Certain general conceptions underlie the taboos. The first is that of *ubupuli*, filth, which is held to come from the sex fluids, menstruation, and childbirth, as well as from a corpse, and the blood of a slain enemy. All these are felt to be both disgusting and dangerous, and the sex fluids are held to be particularly dangerous to an infant, hence the taboo on husband and wife resuming intercourse very soon after childbirth.

946 So too, when the child is very young, we think it very bad for the parents to sleep together at all, because when the child is very young

* This account came from a score or more women not cited individually, as well as from our regular informants on ritual whose names are mentioned.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 F7617 Ngombe F7617
Nyakyusa



777 Question: The spirits are angry?
778 Answer: Yes, they say: "That woman for whom we gave marriage-cattle has encouraged her husband." Yes, it is the shades who are angry in his belly.

●142 Kaleme, a doctor, made it clear that the danger to the husband
137 when his wife committed adultery came from the avenger of another
743 man entering her.

If your wife commits adultery you get very tired on a journey, you suffer from diarrhoea; in the old days we hit in war.

Question: What if the adulterer practises extra marriage?

Answer: Yes, if the man is clever he withdraws and the semen falls to the ground. If he always withdraws when he has intercourse with my wife, then I escape, nothing happens. The woman is like a child. See, when your wife who has not yet reached puberty plays with young men on the road it is no matter. Do they create a child with her? No! But if she is an adulteress he is there in her, and I am there in her, and Kyala says: 'Why are those two?' And he spears you, the owner of the woman. You are killed by going to the woman; that is filth. But if I catch an adulteress with my wife, even if he has practised extra marriage, I am angry and kill him—there is jealousy! But as for diarrhoea, I do not suffer from it.

737 The most dangerous adultery of all, according to the Nyakyusa,
738 is that of a man with his father's wife. Angamwalile explained:

If a man dies and his son has been lying with his wives in secret, whether with or without his permission, the son is very much afraid to approach his father's place. If he goes near or touches the corpse he will himself die, for he is one flesh with his father; their blood has mingled in the woman's belly. He keeps a long way away and so do the wives with whom he has lain. The leading men of the village are told
[737] about it and a doctor is fetched and the son and the wives involved are taken to a swamp and roasted there. If he is the eldest son a younger brother kills the wife meanwhile. Then he comes back to the house, eats and kills a cow himself. While you were away in Europe I saw a case of this with my own eyes. A man died whose son had been lying with his wives. As soon as the son approached his father's place he fell down sick to death. People picked him up and carried him away to a distance. Then he began to breathe a little easier. They took him to a
[737] swamp and roasted him and he recovered, more or less. He is still unwell from time to time. It is not customs, just illness. And if, before the father's death, such a son approaches his father, the old man gets very ill indeed and the elder wives turn the son out of the house. There is none of this trouble if a brother [other a full brother or a half-brother]

no man entered the confinement hut in which a woman remained until the cord had dropped off the new-born child and she had purified herself, and she did not normally resume cooking for her husband for some weeks; but these taboos are less strictly observed than formerly, partly, our informants insisted, because the country has been pacified and men do not fear to die in battle if they neglect them.

The obvious interpretation here is that a man is felt to partake of the weakness of a menstruating or confined woman if he comes into association with her. 'His legs become swollen and painful and he is very tired'; 'strength leaves him'; 'he has no speed in running'; 'his belly aches and his body grows red' .... The picture is surely one of a woman's physical weakness: a man is identified with his wife during pregnancy, observing the taboos she observes, and during menstruation and confinement he can isolate himself as far as possible from her lest he share her weakness; but none of our informants made a connection between the weakness of the woman and the weakness of the man—the interpretation is ours. The Nyakyusa were obsessed with the idea of 'filth' emanating from menstruation and childbirth; indeed, the feeling that women, by reason of their physiology and the taboos on washing during menstruation, are dirty, is cited by men as one of the reasons for not eating with them or sitting to chat with them. Only in this limited sense is the conception of ritual impurity linked with social status. Here the contrast with a Hindu society, in which states of ritual impurity (basically very similar to those of the Nyakyusa) are linked with caste differences, is marked.[1]

The second general conception underlying the theme of precautions is that of abuta, heaviness, a condition associated with sexual intercourse, pregnancy, the puberty of witchcraft, and medicines.[2] A 'heavy' (nzito) person is dangerous to an 'empty' (tupu) one, hence women sleeping with their husbands, and pregnant women avoid mothers with infants and brides in seclusion, who are 'empty'; and the 'empty' are vexed to prevent diarrhoea and give them weight. Diarrhoea and 'emptiness' are closely associated.

The great specific against 'emptiness' is *ikipilo* medicine, used in the puberty, birth, and death rituals, and even used to protect cattle against a menstruating woman. 'If a woman is the only wife

[1] Cf. M. N. Srinivas, *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India* (1952).
[2] Cf. Monica Wilson, *Good Company*, p. 30.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



her husband may give her *dipiki* to rub on her hands and on a stick with which she touches each of the cattle. She gives them *dipiki* that they may not be "empty". Then she can clean out the byre at any time."

A third idea that occurs, again and again, is that of *ukubilanya*, overstepping, which is used in both a literal and a metaphorical sense. It is taboo for a woman to step over her husband in any way, hence there are explicit rules (taught during initiation) on posture in intercourse. If she should step over him it is said that 'his legs will swell' and he has grounds for divorcing her. It is taboo for an adult to step over a child and for a woman who is having intercourse to step over one who is not, though a child may step over an adult and a virgin or youth who is not having intercourse may step over a married person of the same sex who is not. In a society in which everyone sits on the ground, often with legs outstretched, observance of the taboo necessitates care.

In its metaphorical sense *ukubilanya* is used for a 'heavy' person coming into close contact with an 'empty' one, as, for example, a woman who is sleeping with her husband entering the hut of a woman with a new-born child, or the mother of a bride entering intercourse before her daughter has had intercourse, or a bride who has not yet brought the *dibalaga*, the symbol of her union with her husband, to her parents, drinking from her mother's calabash, or entering the inner part of her hut; or a wife who has committed adultery cooking for her husband. It is used, too, of a woman who continues to bear children after the marriage of her son for, it is said, if she does so the son's wife will never conceive at all, or will be long in conceiving, or her child will not walk, on account of a curse.

Sterility: It is not customary for mother and son both to have infants. Women usually begin to stop intercourse when their sons marry. They say it is not good that both mother and son should have small children, because the mother of the young man now thinks of helping her daughter-in-law in nourishing her children. If mother and son both have babies, people are much astonished and say it is not a good custom; they ensure a curse (*ligawe*) and the fertility of the son and his wife runs.

Mwalingi's wife put it this way:

I know all having children when my son is married for I should receive my grandchild in my arms, and care for my grandchildren, and be with them in the house.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1936)1937 FN17 Ngondo FN17
Nyakyusa



[75] *Ubulimbi* means to pass, to surpass, and *ukulilenga* [overstepping], in its metaphorical use, implies that 'one has power and the other is weak, as the powerful one does some injury to the weak one'.

[76] Fourthly, as was made apparent in the puberty ritual, it is held
[77] to be dangerous to 'mix bloods'. Adultery is not only an infringe-
[78] ment of the exclusive rights of a husband, but it may injure him directly, causing him to have diarrhoea, which is a 'getting rid of the filth' due to contact with a strange 'blood'. It was implied that intercourse with a menstruating woman was in some sense 'mixing bloods' also, and the danger to parents of contact with a newly-married daughter before a precautionary ritual has been performed, arose from the same thing; the parents, through their daughter, are brought into contact with the blood of another lineage, that of the new son-in-law.

[79] Besides being 'heavy' and therefore liable to 'overcome' others, a pregnant woman is thought to reduce the quantity of any grain she approaches, for the foetus within her is voracious and ameliorates it. Therefore neither she nor her husband (who participates in her condition) may approach other people's millet[1] or beans or oil-seeds spread out to dry, or speak to those who are reaping or grinding or stamping or hoeing, without making a gesture of good-will by spitting on a pebble or knotting a leaf, and throwing it into the heap of grain. The emotion is fear of a miscarriage, for the owners of the food may have used medicines 'so that the food may be much and people be astonished'. Her own crops a pregnant woman may handle freely, and a chief's wife does not observe the taboo in her own village.

Two or three quotations will make these conceptions clearer:

*Informant*: When my wife has conceived they say we are both 'heavy', both my wife and I. Then, if oil-seeds or millet are out drying in the sun, they tell us not to speak. 'You are heavy men,' they say. So we are silent. They say that if there is talking we will suck half of the oil-seeds or millet, and it will diminish. Yes, I must avoid the grain even though I am alone, because I am heavy.

*Kaswila*: Maize does not vanish but millet and beans. The child which is being made bewitch them; they disappear. . . . The child has opened its mouth wide, to have gaps.[2] It is that child which is being

[80] [1] Some held that millet was the only grain affected, others maintained that maize was also.

[2] *Ukwaba ipanduka ukupanda ukwaba.* *Ukupanda* is used of the gaping jaws of a crocodile.

[269] [787] millet, beans and pumpkin with medicines. 'We fear lest the medicines we have drunk will turn round in the belly';[1] and they must be buried in a hut. 'If they are buried outside there will be drought and famine.'

[846] [•862] *(ii) The mere purpose and symbolism*

The overt purpose of the twin ritual is plain to all Nyakyusa. Twin birth is thought to be contagious, causing other twin births, and also to make men and cattle ill. The ritual is to prevent this. Mwambelile, a middle-aged pagan, was explicit on the point:

> People are afraid to go to the house of a man with twins. They think that they will have twins themselves if they do, and so do not like twin births; they are taboo in the country. Or perhaps their legs will swell, or their bellies, or faces, if they go to his house. So we go to a doctor and he comes and sprinkles all the people in the village, even tiny children, and all the cattle. He takes a banana stalk to burn the twin birth (*pakulya ipasi*). He burns it because of the twin birth. The ember is hot and smouldered. He sprinkles us all with it and when we have all been treated we say we have been burnt because of the twin birth.

[751] When a man has begotten twins we are in awe of the Kyala (*ukuliaba Kyala apa*). . . . If people drink out of the same vessel as the parents of twins, or if the father of twins sleeps with his other wives, this makes the disease increase, the disease of swelling legs and stomach; men catch it, the wives catch it, the children and fathers of the wives catch it. There is also a twin ceremony for cattle; if a cow drops twin calves we fear the same things. You, your wife and children drink medicine, and the cows are all sprinkled with medicine—for not your other relatives, or neighbours.

Mwakibelile himself said:

> If I did not wash and come to me with my relatives, my legs would swell, I should pass out and gasp. Swelling of the legs is due to our duties (*mitimo yetu*) or perhaps Kyala becomes angry (*Kyala pwe akukila*).

[845] References to Kyala as the cause of twins are frequent:

> Kasenga: The duties are to twin birth, and Kyala is there—it is he who gives two children. We drive them away. Kyala and the duties are equivalent. When we bury the *ilibalaga* in the banana grove I say: 'Kyala, leave my children (which means my wife) for me, you duties leave it for me.' If the duties are angry perhaps my penis is broken in copulation.
>
> Mwakisambo: I have not heard people speak of the duties in twin

[1] *cf.* Native Tribes, *loc. supra*, p. 32.

2: WGeen E-S (1936-1938)1937 FN17 Ngumde FN17
Nyakyusa



then take hold of the corpse. But they wait for the doctor. If they do not do so the same disease will come—a swelling of legs and diarrhoea. An ordinary corpse is not feared in this way.

You, a man have to take his other wives. He says: 'If I just go to them I shall give them the disease of the twins that I began with this wife.' The wife he takes without precaution will swell in the legs and stomach, and pass blood with her stools. He first aims to have a child with the wife who bore twins, waiting till the twins are walking about. He lies with the mother of the twins but withdraws, and then, when the children are grown, he impregnates her. He does not go to the other wives. And if he asks for another wife before trying to impregnate the mother of the twins her father will refuse. If he takes her without asking, her father will make him pay a cow. He can only ask for another wife if the mother of the twins does not conceive. For one month' the husband refrains altogether from intercourse, then after the ritual he goes to his wife (the mother of the twins) but does not impregnate her. . . . A man is supposed to tell the twin doctor before he begets another child with his wife. He must do it openly, and not in secret. It is taboo to do it secretly. Nothing happens, but the doctor is angry, saying: 'Why did you not tell me, the doctor, the owner of the body?'

Thieves already familiar from the death and puberty-marriage rituals never again leave. The parents of twins are isolated and shunned like menstruous and nubile girls. Contact with them is held to be dangerous because 'those below'—in this case Kyala and Mbasi rather than the shades—have brooded over them, and must be driven off before normal procreation can be resumed. After their isolation the *libalaga*—the symbol of their ritual union—must be offered to the shades of both lineages, that of the man and that of the woman. There is also the eating of balls of porridge, the symbol, in the other rituals, of the actions of a mulimwe, but the fear of mulimwe was not utilized by our informants as the purpose of the twin ritual; rather it is the formidable potency which produces two children instead of one, that is the danger—'the parents of twins have a fire'—and men protect themselves against it by burning themselves with her medicines. They 'burn the twin birth'.

[1] Presumably longer when the ordination and ritual bond began.

2. Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



in the banana grove. No one eats any. Then in the morning the children go there and eat. Are they not the comrades of the shades? But for us grown people it is taboo. We eat later on. That is the old custom. And formerly no one dried the fish which first entered the trap. They cooked and ate them in the house with the children. . . . If they put them to dry in the sun the shades were angry, saying: 'Where are the fish we gave you? We do not see them in the house.' 783

Kasitwa: Sometimes it is her father's anger which prevents a girl from becoming pregnant. Perhaps she runs off with men repeatedly, then her father is angry with her. He says: 'She is squandering my cattle.' He complains (*dambwaga*) with his wives at the hearth and calls to mind his fathers, the shades. Then the girl does not conceive. 842 578

If later on the father forgives her, he sends a messenger to her husband, saying: 'Send me your wife, let her come and we will pray.' Then, after calling his fellows and killing a bull, he takes meat from the top of the forelimb (*mwapa*) and cuts it into pieces and puts a piece into the mouth of the girl, and she eats. They say that it is to drive the shades from the body of the girl, the shades who have caught hold of her fecundity. Some of the meat from the *mwapa* is thrown down, and the children pick it up and eat it. It is taboo for others to take and eat it. 783 842

Fanuwa (a Christian elder): Perhaps your father has died and people have come to marry your sister; and perhaps the sister of your father (*mpalwanga*) claims one cow, saying: 'I am your father, give me one.' If you grudge it, then there is much murmuring which is heard by the shades, by your brother and your father who died. And so if your sister does not conceive people say: 'They grudged the father's sister, the shades are angry.' Then you seek a fowl and beer, and send them to your father's sister, and she puts the fowl under her bed that the shades may know it. She speaks, saying: 'Indeed I was angry.' The shades hear. That fowl opens the door; she knows that the cow is near, it is coming. She confesses everything (*shanyaa yoose*) on receiving the fowl; this she speaks in her house. You go later with the cow to bring your sister to your father's sister. Then if the girl bears at her husband's everyone says: 'Indeed it was so.' 842 578 783

And if your sister has run off with a man and you are angry, the shades hear. You say: 'I do not know if she will conceive there.' Then she does not bear and people say: 'Let her take her husband to her brothers.' If the husband is rich perhaps he seeks two cows and a bull calf, but the cows for bringing back are not sent first, a hen is sent first with a message, saying: 'I come on such and such a day.' The hen is put under the bed. The shades know about it. I, the brother, who was angry, pray, and she bears a child. But this does not happen among Christians; there is nothing of it.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1957 FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



spread and the foods and altars traditional in them continue to be used: thus Nyakyusa Christians use wheaten bread and wine from the grape, whereas their pagan neighbours use bananas and millet beer, and their altar is a table set at the east end of a consecrated building, not the earth of a banana grove.

Nyakyusa ideas of physiology are those of a strongly patrilineal society, in marked contrast with those of the Bemba who are matrilineal:[1] to the Nyakyusa a woman is a 'bag' which the husband fills with his 'blood' and so creates a child, while the Bemba believe that 'blood' is passed through the woman, not the man. The taboos of pregnancy also have a patrilineal slant. A difficult labour is commonly attributed, among the Nyakyusa, to the wife's adultery, never to that of her husband, as among the Bemba.

Differences in ritual vary in general form with the differences in economy and structure, but there remains a relative autonomy between them. Not only do symbols spread beyond the economy within which they were coined but, as we showed earlier, poetic licence exists, and the particular associations made by priest and poet are not predictable. Ritual idioms are linked to language, but how closely we do not know. What evidence there is from Bantu Africa suggests a similarity in symbols over a wide area, connected with the similarity in language, but such a hypothesis has yet to be established.

Secondly, the expression of sentiments reaffirms them. Treating food, and reproduction, and family relationships, and the community as sacred, expresses the importance of these things to the group concerned, and at the same time breeds respect for them. Treating them as important in ritual makes people feel that they are important. In Whitehead's phrase, 'the object of symbolism is the enhancement of the importance of what is symbolized'.[2] Rituals are also cathartic in that they express and explicitly reject anti-social attitudes, such as anger, terror, and the wish for death.

Thirdly, the general attitudes expressed in Nyakyusa rituals are necessary to the continuance of any society; they are conditions of social living; and the particular attitudes are necessary to the maintenance of the particular Nyakyusa structure.

Every society, if it is to survive, must value fertility in some

[1] A. I. Richards, 'Some types of family structure amongst the Central Bantu' in *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*, edited by Radcliffe-Brown and Forde, p. 207; 'Mother-right among the Central Bantu' in *Essays Presented to C. G. Seligman*, edited by Evans-Pritchard, Firth, Malinowski, Schapera, p. 276.

[2] A. N. Whitehead, *Symbolism: Its Meaning and Effects* (1923), p. 74.

2: Wilson E-5 (1934-1938)1937 File? Ngonde File?
Nyakyusa



[2] degree. Sir Charles Darwin has suggested that those societies
[1] 182 which put a premium on fertility will ultimately be dominant, by the weight of numbers,[1] but the evidence from Africa suggests that those societies which have in fact survived have regulated reproduction. Of the concern of the Nyakyusa with fertility there can be no doubt. The gods are the reproductive principle expressed in the idiom of a patrilineal society—'the shade and the women are brothers'. One of the express purposes of the rituals of kinship, as well as of the communal rituals, is to secure fertility; one of the major assertions of religion is the fear of the loss of it. And further than this, all their major activities are expressed in terms of the reproductive cycle and thought to be linked to it. The association of crops, and cattle, and hunting, and war with pregnancy and menstruation in women has already been indicated, and a more general connection between fertility in crops, and cattle, and men will be shown in the account of communal rituals. The two principal crafts, iron smelting and bark-cloth making, are associated with the act of coition. So also are fire-making, grinding, cooking, and eating; and the hearth and hut are identified with the union of husband and wife, and with childbirth. Whether such a preoccupation with fecundity, and the tendency to express all activities in terms of the reproductive cycle, are stronger among the Nyakyusa than among most other peoples we do not yet know, but at least they do not minimize its importance. It is the more significant therefore that, though maximum fertility of soil and stock was sought, there was a limitation of the human reproductive rate by deliberate spacing, and by limiting a woman's period of child-bearing to the years before her son's marriage. The Nyakyusa appear to have been an expanding people in relatively empty country, and the six or seven births per woman which this system allowed, combined with an infant mortality of perhaps 50 per cent, did not cause undue pressure upon their resources.

[2] 182 The particular form of limitation was linked to the structure of age-villages. The very wide spacing, with four to five years between pregnancies, and the taboo on a woman bearing after the marriage of her eldest son, ensured that, as a general rule, full brothers built in different villages. Thus the most closely-knit kinship group, that of full brothers and their sons, did not coincide with the local group, and the fissiparous tendency of lineages was checked by village loyalties. A group of full brothers and their

[1] Charles Darwin, *The Next Million Years*, p. 171 *et passim*.

J. Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
F317 Ngonde F317



the spear which is to slay her if she disregards it. The injured husband, too, has the right to inflict death upon the paramour. This is no mere tale of the past, but a grim fact of to-day. Just a very short time ago, two of my workmen asked a day's leave of absence to go and bury a relative who had suffered the extreme penalty at the hands of an outraged husband. Cases of this nature are very numerous, and are necessarily treated by British law as murder; but native law still looks upon them as a just reprisal by the husband.

Divorce is granted only for approved reasons. The husband, when he believes he has ground for divorce, requests his go-between to take up the case; but the latter will do so only if he is satisfied that the evidence is sufficient to secure a verdict in his client's favour. The woman's father fixes a day for the public hearing of the case, himself as judge, for there is an appeal to the chief only if either party is dissatisfied with the decision arrived at. The finding of the court is in all cases reported to the chief.

The commonest cause is unfaithfulness of the wife, which being proved or admitted, there is no further discussion, although the trouble is sometimes patched up by the gift of a cow to the husband. If a wife has conceived, and does not tell her husband, it is a very grave matter indeed, for she is assumed to be trying to hide from him what is not his, and an action for divorce may follow. Barrenness, if known to be of the wife, is a cause of divorce; but not seldom the wife retorts the charge upon her husband, and cases are not unknown where, by mutual agreement, both

3: Mackenzie M-S (ca. 1925) 1925
F317 Ngonde F317



daily for supplies, provided it is again quickly covered 261
up with both mud and flowing water. All this must
be done at night lest the killing-place be revealed to
others, and the fish stolen.

Bread is made of twice-ground maize with salt 258
added. It is kneaded into loaves of about three
inches thick, and placed in layers, interleaved with
banana leaf, in a pot with maize in the bottom. This
bread is often taken on a journey, and will keep for
five or six days. Eggs are "scrambled," with milk [17]
and salt, in a broken pot, but this is a European
introduction. No young girl will eat hard-boiled eggs: [18]
they produce a snake in the abdomen, which, of course,
in turn produces barrenness.

Very unpleasant to our minds are some of the 262
delicious foods the Konde rejoice in: flying ants
eaten alive as they are picked up where they fall from
their brief honeymoon in the air; crawling white
ants, a horrible mass of moving life; the Kungu fly,
found on Lake Nyasa, whence it comes ashore in dense
clouds, settles on bush and tree, and is shaken off into
small baskets, to be taken home and baked into cakes
while it is still fresh. In Bundali it is said that some
still eat lion's flesh, and once upon a time the crocodile
was eaten at Karonga. Sorcerers are accused of [154, 244]
devouring human flesh. A new grave is sprinkled
with a powerful medicine which makes the corpse
come up without disturbing the soil, and the ghoulish
feast is enjoyed without leaving a trace of the deed
behind.

[illegible] Manuscript 16-5 [illegible] 1923 1923
[illegible] Ngumbo [illegible]



757 the fang will drop out, and the man will be saved!
878 There are men living near me who claim to have seen this being done.

879 The birth of children is accompanied by loving care, great superstition, and much medical treatment, useful or otherwise. All women at that time are given a drink of *indido* leaves, pounded and mixed with water. If the placenta has not come away satisfactorily, castor oil is given. And if pain supervenes, the bark of *indido* is again given, pounded and mixed with water. For a child weak at birth, roots of *ewondo* and *mongwiwa* are taken, pounded, mixed with water, and the child is washed in the mixture. Sterility in man or woman can be removed
•862 by the right drugs; and when a woman is getting on in years and wishes no more children, a mixture is in use which will have the desired effect. Medicines
847 for producing abortion are widely known, and
839 frequently used, as also are love potions.

757 Steaming is resorted to in cases of great pain or weakness. Water is cooked in a large pot, with the bark of *mpwempwe* added. When the pot has boiled, it is taken off the fire, and the patient, covered with a mat, kneels over it, supported if very weak, for about ten minutes. Massaging also is employed when one is very tired, the leaves of *mayoka* being pounded to give a juice for lubrication, or, as the people themselves say, to get into the body through the pores. Cupping is employed for headache and rheumatic pain. Eight cuts are made in two lines, on each side of the head; a small horn is put over the cuts; a

6-W Gem E-5 (1934-1936) 934 F31:7 Ngenda F31:7
Nyakyusa



crops are planted at different seasons of the year so that there is always some hoeing to be done.

In a polygynous family each wife has her own fields (*amakaha*), hoed by her husband and her own sons, which she plants, weeds and reaps with the help of her own daughters, and the produce of which she uses to cook for her husband, her own children and herself. The relative rights of husband and wife to disposal of produce vary with different crops, but no co-wife has any rights over a woman's food. She may, and often does, ask her co-wives to help in her fields and sends them presents of cooked food from her own fire, she may help them and receive presents in return; but they have no rights over her fields or her food, only her husband and herself. And the fields which are hoed by a bachelor son belong to his own mother, who in her turn cooks food for him to eat.

Each wife has either a hut to herself, or else a separate alcove in a large hut, and there she has her fire for cooking. She trains her own daughter and sister or sends an unmarried daughter for them.

At meals the ages and the sexes eat separately; in every polygynous Ngonde each wife sends a dish to the husband, to whom the wives take it in turns to cook for him. The husband eats alone or with neighbours of his own age[1] to share his dish, the elder boys and their friends[2] eat separately from the younger children, and each mother again usually eats with her own daughters, apart.

In the relationship of husband and wife the chief elements are sexual intercourse, co-operation in work, the procreation of children and factors of personal inclination, character and temperament. By men women are praised for sexual skill, cleanliness and beauty, for good cooking and hard work, for their fecundity, and for gentleness of speech and behaviour, and those with opposite qualities are criticized. Among women men are praised for sexual skill and attentiveness, for vigour in hoeing and skill in house-building, and for kindness; while sexual neglect, laziness, impotence and cruelty are disliked and may cause a woman to leave her husband for another man.

The birth of children is a most important factor in the marriage relationship, for children are greatly desired both by men and women. They are desired for themselves and also because they bring their parents wealth and prestige; a boy will one day work in the fields of his father and mother, a girl will bring in cattle from her marriage. And the possession of children brings compliments and respect both to man and woman.

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[1] Vide infra "The Age-Village."

[2] [Ed.—II, pp. 249 ff.—Analyst.]

[illegible]

[illegible] Impotence and barrenness are well known facts, and ought to much used to mean these; but apart from their operation it is believed that such conception directly depends upon the frequency with which a man visits his wife. And thus the bearing of children is, for a woman, a demonstration of her husband's great affection for her. People address the number of children that a woman has borne to prove, in conversation, that she is her husband's favourite.

[illegible] Polygyny is the ideal of every pagan Nyakyusa; a plurality of wives is necessary, in this society, for full sexual satisfaction, wives bring a man wealth, prestige and authority, the more wives he has the more children, he thinks, will be born to him.

[illegible] It is believed that any contact with the sexual fluids is dangerous to a young child's health, and so, after a woman has borne a child, her husband is supposed ritually to refrain from intercourse with her for about a year, until the child is old enough to play by itself and allow its mother time to wash in the mornings before suckling it. Then he may begin to visit her again, but still she must not become pregnant until the child is weaned. "If she does her breasts become rotten" and the first child is harmed. As children are not weaned for two or three years, this rule involves the couple in yet another year or more either of entire interruption or of infrequent intercourse (which also is believed to avoid conception). These taboos on intercourse after a child's birth are to some extent observed in practice, and are one of the reasons for polygyny among the Nyakyusa.

[illegible] Another reason is the absence of hired labour. With a few minor exceptions the only way a man can increase the supply of labour at his disposal is by marrying more wives. Polygyny is the mark of a wealthy man, conditioned by his control of cattle, conditioning his supply of food. And the cattle spent in marriage come back again with interest as the polygynist's daughters begin to be betrothed and married.

[illegible] It is extremely common for a man to take as his second or third wife the sister, half-sister, or brother's daughter of his first or second wife. By doing so a man pays a great compliment to the wife whose sister, or niece, he takes and to her family; his action implies complete satisfaction with her and friendship with her family. He sends his wife home "to fetch out (her kinswoman) into the open" (ukwasisula); but she will not agree to do so unless she approves of him as a husband, and so, if she does agree, her action likewise compliments him. I know of one case in which a man wished to take his second wife's younger sister in this way,

Wilson E-5 (1934-1955) 1959
FMU Uganda FMU
Nyakyusa



[748] were not ill, they were not troubled as we are. For later in the evening, [607] while the Lwembe was still alive, the commoner priests removed his nails and hair; they came one and plucked them off. He shouted: 'Who is snatching at me?' They replied: 'No one', and then they smothered him with cloth in the mouth and in the anus, and he soon [778] died (i.e. he died). . . . They did it only when he had intimated it himself by saying: 'I have some food in the land of the shades'; they did not begin it themselves. . . . They collected the nails in a little bamboo fish, and a priest counted them so that Lwembe might not go away with the food to the land of the shades, that the fertility of the soil (*ifyalo*), this *ifyalo*, might always remain there.

[779] These nails, the hair and the nails, were held to be magically connected through their growth with the growth of crops.

While the Lwembe lived he was secluded—ordinary men did [607] not see him—and he was subject to numerous taboos. For example, [780] he might not tread in water lest the country should be flooded; he never bathed in a stream (as Nyakyusa men do daily) and was carried across any river when travelling; he must not sit on a green banana leaf lest the bananas in the country should fail, but was always provided with a skin to sit upon, and he ate only the middle portion of a banana throwing away the ends for 'if he finished the whole of a banana he would cause hunger in the country'. No one might grasp his hand, or drink out of the same calabash as he, save the priests of his own age; if he drank from a calabash when travelling he took it with him, for 'if he left it behind he left hunger in that place'.

The selection of the Lwembe was in the hands of the hereditary priests of Lubaga and the hereditary Kings priests, who came from BaKinga townships at Lubaga. The man they chose must be of good character—at the time we were in BaNyakyusa the only willing candidate was rejected because 'he is a bad man, a thief, they refuse to have a thief as priest'—he must exhibit in his own [972] • house the power of fertility. 'They don't search just anyone, but one with children, and cattle, and fertility of the fields in his own homestead. If the man taken as chief is not fertile and rich there will be many sterile people in the homesteads, and much disease and hunger.'

When the priests had decided upon the man of their choice, they seized him and set him upon a sacred skin and a pad of leaves; and it was believed that once he had been set thereon he [761] would die if he refused office; tales were told of a younger brother

S.Wilson B.4 (1934-1955) 1954
PRO Uganda PRO
Nyakyusa



the house of Mwamalongoka, a hereditary priest of Lubaga (whose ancestor came with the first Luembe (*vide* p. 6). There were present five chiefs of Mwakisinya's (36) line, including Mwanjala II (38), who represents the Luembe, but is ailing and has never been installed; two Kinga priests and a Kinga messenger sent to escort them; four priests of Lubaga (including Mwamalongoka himself), Kantile the priest of Selya, and Godfrey Wilson. [92.

Mwanjala brought a small black bull worth £20, bought with the money and a hoe provided by the Kinga, and sent for a stem of bananas and a flask of fresh milk. A rowdy discussion began about the procedure: 'In the old days we used to pour ebley over our hands to wash them, and to wash our mouths, and in the second grove we would pour it away. . . .' Then the party went to a small grove surrounded by cultivated land, and Nyanigwa, the Kinga priest, stopped at the stump of a tree, still alive, on the edge of the grove, saying: 'This is the *umpandapanda* tree [a fine plantain on the coming out of a child] where we used to pour the beer,' but Mwanjala denied it saying 'No, they have hewn away it, the tree was here in the beer path.' After some dispute they agreed to go right into the grove to sacrifice. The grove is on the site at which the trees were planted at the 'coming out' of Mwakisinya (36) the last Luembe, and the house of his senior wife, Njale, was built. She is buried there, where her sweet courtyard used to be, and during Mwakisinya's lifetime the beer used to be poured out beside this sacred tree. The last sacrifice here was when Kimondo was a boy (*ubuja-pi*), hence the uncertainty as to the place, but just why the beer sacrifices had all been at the homestead of Kinga (*vide supra*) was not clear. [93. [77]

Nyanigwa (the Kinga priest) asked Mwamalongoka (the priest of Lubaga) to bring over the three calabashes, one of millet beer, one of milk and one of bamboo beer, but Mwamalongoka refused and Nyanigwa had to fetch them himself. It was the Kinga who had insisted on the Nyakyusa providing millet beer saying: 'If we first pour out our bamboo beer we will go off with all the fertility of the country, let them begin with theirs.' Mwanjala, summoned by Nyanigwa, came and stood at the foot of the tree while Nyanigwa poured millet beer first into his hands and then at the foot of the tree, and the priests prayed, Mwanjala and Nyanigwa in Nyakyusa, Kilungubeja in Kinga: [94.

Oh thou Mwandipili, thou Kimondo, thou Mwamalongoka,[1] thou

[1] Three hereditary priests of Lubaga.

and Mwanjapo and Kiangoa entered it over the rails which were then put out with the horns to dry in the sun. Mwanjapo suggested getting Mwanjokiago, the doctor, to treat them further, and the others agreed saying: 'Let Mwanjapo find someone, that the earth may be good, that it be heavy.' Nyhalowa had spoken earlier of the cattle giving much milk after the treatment of the rails. And they went on to discuss the fact that the young chief Mwanbago III (1931) had begotten an child by the wife inherited from his elder brother (1930) whose place he had taken. Thus the function of the chief in creating plenty and fertility was in the priests' minds, and there may be some link between the virility of the chief and success in war—one informant spoke of the chief's entire wives jumping over the rails immediately after the consummation of their marriage—but of this we are not certain. What is common knowledge is that the rails are 'for seizing cattle', and they are associated with 'women and blood'. We were told at the conclusion of the ritual: 'Formerly we should have gone tomorrow, after this treating of the rails, to fight.'

Besides medicines for majesty, courage, and popularity as rulers, chiefs use medicines to prevent themselves against the fearfulness of the graves in which they sacrifice, medicines to 'close the country to hunger', to make their capitals grand, and to cause thieves who have stolen, to walk round and round until caught.

Medicines are regarded as essential to authority, victory, and successful rule, and the kind used and the dose given are adjusted to the status and character of the individual. 'Village headmen do not drink the most important draught; they drink a lower one, indunge; the senior headman is given nsau, the junior lua.' And the chief's wives do not drink draughts at all, but only a powder suitable for them. But the use of these medicines has its dangers. The chief, like other people who have been drinking protective medicines, does not eat the new crops grown on fields fertilized by ash without fortifying himself. The danger is said to come from the burnt rubbish heaps, because medicines for defence against witches and sorcerers are burnt in them and, as we have seen, certain of the medicines which the chief uses create a power akin to witchcraft. He tastes the new millet ritually in June, the new peas in September, and pumpkin leaves in November; and he also tastes the 'new earth' at the break of the rains in October or early November. 'We think that the medicines we have drunk will

S.Wilson B.4 (1934-1951) 1959
FMU Ngwada FMU
Nyakyusa



play one village against another and go to sleep in that section of the country which supports him, but he does not anger all his headmen. In the same way a village headman does not anger the main body of his men. In short, public opinion is an effective sanction because those in authority believe that the disapproval of their fellows may bring a fever or pestilence upon them. One of our Christian informants was insistent that, were it not for the belief in the 'breath of men', pagan chiefs and headmen would act tyrannically.

The situations in which a chief or headman fears the breath of men are very varied. We have already referred to the chief who thought his illness was due to his refusal to hold the 'reaping out' for his men when advised to do so.[1] Mwaipopo, before whom court a very bitter land dispute between two of his villages had been brought, refused to give judgement and was careful to sleep in the village that had possession of the land, and therefore was cause for anger.[2] Kasitile, the hereditary priest of the chief's lineage who counted as 'a chief' as opposed to 'a commoner', thought he had angered the village headmen of his generation (who had become priests) by not providing meat for them (*vide infra*, p. 105).

The headmen are responsible for the health of their chief and it is they who go to consult an oracle if he is ill and take him to a doctor. Mwenkuga II (131), heir to Mwaipopo's chieftaincy, had not begotten a son by any of the wives he inherited from his elder brother who had died. His village headmen[3] went to consult an oracle and were told that it was the wrath (*imisoka*) of his father; so they reported the matter to Mwaipopo, who sent a junior kinsman to consult another oracle. The diagnosis was confirmed and Mwaipopo gathered his younger brothers and prayed and told the shades that he had no quarrel with his kinsmen. Then he told the village headmen to take Mwenkuga to a doctor for treatment, but this they did not do, so that Mwenkuga went to consult a doctor on his own. According to Kasitile it was because the headmen had not taken Mwenkuga that the medicine did not work. 'They should take him to the doctor and be present in dreams, to watch over him in dreams.' What the headmen were angry about was not revealed—there was no obvious cause.

[1] *cf. ob., pp. 194-5.* [2] *cf. ob., pp. 188-90.*

[3] Mwenkuga I who died had 'come out' before Mwenkuga II inherited from him, but Mwaipopo (118) continued to rule as chief and draw a Government salary.

9 Wilson E-5 (1934-1938) 1939
FN17 Ngonde FN17
Nyakyusa



away. We run with him, we leave him over there, we return and bring him in. We drive him off because he brought sickness; when we have done so we return and bring him again that we may be pure—soldiers, anger—and he also may be pure. We are with him all the time; we never throw him away. We always have the old one in the belly, we exhort a lot, and if I die I am with him, this earth (pointing to the earth of his homestead) never goes away, it is his. So if the corpse fall where I have lived I say: 'The shade is angry, this earth.' (*Pepo shale nshongano kwako nanshi, nanshiko ja jaja, nshongo nyheshi nshongano—mpaki nga pantyenga nshomo ja jaja—pepo longo nshimbi nshiti 'nyanshe shalele mpaki nga*' *ku fyalele.*) Yes, in the death ritual also we drive him away with his sickness, and bring him back, always the old one.

After the ritual all have normal intercourse with their wives, but the night before there was no intercourse. How should we do evil unto the man whom we have not yet blessed the shade? But when we have blessed him then all of us lie on our mats again. To lie together is to overstep the ritual, the shades are shocked and say, 'How can you do this? You agreed yesterday to bless the shades and you do this, why?' Then later, if a woman bears a child which cries at night, people say, 'You overstepped the ritual, pray for the child.' Or perhaps the woman is barren. We liken the water and the war cry to what we do on the mats—the water is the shade's and the war cry is his, it is his work. When we have spoken to the shade he comes into my belly—then I come together with my wife again.

This interpretation by Mwanakombo indicates that the blowing out of water is a symbol of ejection. 'It is what men do.' It has been shown in *Rituals of Kinship* that the shades are driven out of the body in the sex act; that the shade and semen are identified; and that driving off the shade is a condition of health and unity. The fact that blowing out water is also a symbol of confusion—ejection of anger, 'bringing out all that is within'—and supplication does not invalidate Mwanakombo's interpretation, for the same act is symbolized in many ways and the same symbol expresses events which are distinct, but associated. As in so many societies, abstinence is felt to be a necessary preparation for the celebration of a ritual, and the union, real or symbolic, of husband and wife the necessary conclusion.[1] All this is intelligible only in terms of the Nyakyusa ideas about procreation discussed in *Rituals of Kinship*. The shade is the vital force in men

[1] cf. I. Cunnison, 'Headmanship and Ritual at Luapula Villages', *Africa*, xxvi (1956), pp. 5-13; H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe* (1912), vol. i, pp. 300-10; J. Roscoe, *The Baganda* (1911), pp. 46, 55-60

9: Wilson B-S (1934-1991) 1959
F367 Siyende F367
Siyekyana



demand among police and soldiers as well as civvies.) Then there are medicines used by men and women to make themselves more attractive and persuasive to lovers, litigants, leaders, clients, servants, salesmen, and so on.

Certain Siyekyana medicines are based on observation of cause and effect. Their pharmacopeia includes purges and poisons—for example, castor oil has long been cultivated and used both for making ointment and as an aperient—and some of the drugs administered, and the poultices with hot leaves, may well be therapeutic; we have no systematic knowledge of the plants used and cannot assess them. But the scientific element is demonstrably limited, for a great many medicines are based on the principle of association, a feeling of likeness between things, and things felt to be alike are believed to react on one another, like producing like, or like things being antagonistic.

No distinction is made by the Siyekyana themselves between those medicines which one trained in western science would say are based on observation of cause and effect (e.g. a purge or a poison), and those which are based on association—indeed our friends constantly cited supposed observations of cause and effect as evidence of the efficacy of all sorts of medicines and taboos. Mwakyonde used charcoal, mixed with iron from a forge, as a medicine for protection against lightning, burying a little, and powdering a little, and sprinkling it about a homestead, 'because at the forge they blow the bellows and it says, "*Mali, mali, mali*" (i.e. boom, boom, boom) and the lightning *ifumulaka* (booms). When we blow the bellows at a forge it makes a noise like thunder.' There was no hint that he was aware that electricity might be attracted by iron, but he insisted that where he had buried the charcoal and iron the lightning *never* struck again, and he regarded this as cause and effect. Therefore the distinction we have made between observation and association is ours, not theirs.

That the symbolic element is at least as important as the practical was apparent from Lyandileko's treatment for sterility, which was famous for its success. She had three patients one morning, all women wanting to bear children. In front of her she ranged seventeen banana petals and mixed four different medicines in them. Then she chose three young banana shoots and bored a hole in each, inserting into it a length of the mid-rib of a banana leaf, slightly hollowed to form a runnel. She told an onlooker to bring the first petal full of medicine and poured it into the runnel.

S. Wilcox E-5 (1934-1955) 1939
F307 Ogunde F307
Ryerson



376 J42 The patient knelt and received the medicine in cupped hands, guiding it into her mouth. Lyandileke hung a little medicine horn on the round before pouring. The patient kept the medicine in her mouth until the round was removed and she spat through the hole. Then the hole was filled up with the petal off which the medicine had been poured. Lyandileke smeared the patient on the belly with medicine from a horn, and pushed the horn down under her cloth—cloth to the genitals, in front, and on to the buttocks behind. As she did this she said, 'If you are barren the barrenness will go, if you are fertile I give you medicine to bear a child.' This was done for each patient in turn. Then the barrenness markers were planted and the medicine from the remaining petals poured into bottles (two made of banana leaves, one a Vermouth bottle) for the patients to take home. They were to take a dose each day for a week. As the treatment was proceeding Lyandileke talked of her successes: 'So-and-so drank twice and her belly sprouted. . . . So-and-so drank and she came back to me pregnant. . . .'

After a week the women came back to see whether their banana markers had sprouted. Lyandileke explained: 'The banana marker is the child, it sprouts quickly, it is the belly which sprouts quickly. [747] If it dies they commit an evil—the woman does not conceive.' And her son added, 'If a woman's marker dies Lyandileke tells her: "Don't say I have not worked for you, don't you see your banana? You are rotten in yourself, indeed they must have allowed your cord to fall between your mother's legs."[1] They rejoice very much if it has grown.' Each petal represents a child; Lyandileke used male and female symbols (plantain and sweet banana petals) alternately for boys and girls. One mother who had no child had asked for ten, another with two already for eight, another with three already for six. Lyandileke's arithmetic had gone wrong for there were only seventeen petals altogether. The horn is the horn of protection (*akpondo kan ginge*) and it means here, 'May the "iron" stay nicely within, may it not come out in front or behind, may it stay inside.' (Iron is a symbol for the reproductive [274] capacity of women.) Neither Lyandileke nor her son (who were both forthright in their discussion of ritual) seemed to be conscious of any symbolic enactment of coition, though a knowledge of the symbolism of the death and puberty rituals suggests that.

[1] Cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, p. 143.

St Wilson E-9 (1934-1952) 1934
FHU? Nyanja FHU?
Nyakyusa



There is no single supreme power; it lies in the ancestral heroes, in medicines, in witches, and with the shades. Kyala is a hero, a benefactor, to whom sacrifices are made, and he is comparable to Lwembe and Kyungu, though he left no direct descendants. The evidence suggests that the names Kyala, Lwembe or Mbasi, Kyungu, and Ngululu were used in the same way in different areas, Kyala being the hero of the north-east shore of the Lake, Kyungu of the north-west, Lwembe of the central Nyakyusa valley, and Ngululu of the steep edge of the Livingstones. Sometimes informants used Lwembe and Kyala alternatively saying they meant the same thing, although, as we have noted, Lwembe (or Mbasi) was specially associated with cattle, whereas Kyala, who was killed and rose again, only controlled crops, and may perhaps be taken as personifying vegetation. The distinction is in no sense clear-cut, but there is a hint of a cultivating people having [174] been defeated by cattle-keepers with iron weapons, since Kyala was finally killed with a 'razor' (*ubwembe*), and The Razor himself —Lwembe—could not be killed though men tried.

In their creative aspect the heroes and shades are closely identified: 'Kyala creates desire'; 'the shade comes up in the belly when a woman conceives'; 'Kyala and the shades stand together'. Kasitile said:

> Lwembe . . . makes a child. I lie with a woman; Lwembe is there, he works. Sometimes, if he is angry he works badly and a leg is missing, or the woman has a miscarriage. Sometimes he works well. Lwembe goes about looking upon the mothers; he is in my bellows (i.e. in my wife). It is he who came from BaKinga . . . and wished first to build at Nkamba's (i.e. where Nkamba go now live). He failed there and went to Kasambala's and failed there and he stood Lubaga. All is his. A child is his and a cow, and the iron which the Kinga make is his, and food is his. . . . He is in a bull and a man. Where do you get the 'blood' (to beget a child)? Are you alone? . . . No, the Kukwe do not know Lwembe, but the people of the plain do, they are one with us.
>
> QUESTION: And Kyala?
>
> KASITILE: He is there, Kyala and Lwembe are together among us and the people of the plain. It is Lwembe who creates twins. You do not. Who has made your body? Who has created you? Who has given you strength and breath so that you are born, and live, and grow up, and marry? It is Lwembe and Kyala together.[1]

[113] [1] cf. J. Buse, 'Die Zwillingsgeburt bei den Nyakyusa', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 73. Jahrgang, pp. 194ff.; 'Aus dem Leben von Asyukile Mwangi', *Zeitschrift für Eingeborenen-Sprachen*, Band xxxv (1944), p. 101.

G.Wilson E-5 (1936-1938) 1939
1937 Nyakyusa 1937
Nyakyusa



the most of the leaders of Zionist Churches in the south.[797]

It is noticeable that the new 'independent' Churches have a more elaborate form of service than the Church from which their leaders have sprung, and Ngoniola habitually wears conspicuous vestments. There is, of course, great variation between different denominations in the emphasis placed on ritual, some Protestants objecting to it and turning their very insistence on confession and simplicity into a ritual in itself—a taboo. There seems to be a clear tendency in Southern Africa for 'independent' Churches to express themselves more and more in ritual and less in dogma. In this way they reduce the gap between themselves and the pagans, for the pagan religion is expressed almost exclusively in ritual, whereas Christianity is expressed in creeds and confessions as well as in the rituals of the Church.

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### (a) THE CONTRAST BETWEEN PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN

There are certain common elements in the rituals celebrated by pagans and Christians: some of the occasions are the same, and in the conceptions of sacrifice, of death and rebirth, of confession and cleansing, there are similarities; but there are also profound differences. The conception of life, immortality, explains the preoccupation with fertility, for though most Nyakyusa Christians, like the pagans, regard celibacy as evidence of physical abnormality, and the conventional desire of a woman is to have six children—a quiverful in Nyakyusa eyes—yet fertility is no longer the end of all being, sought in every ritual. There are profound differences, too, in the values expressed in the rituals regarding sex relations, the range of moral obligations, and social change. To pagan thought polygyny is good—a man should have many children. Child marriage is defended on the ground that a girl 'goes accustomed to her husband' if she goes to him early, and homosexual relations between youths and young men are tolerated since they have no wives and cannot marry if the elder men are polygynists. What is upheld in the chastity of women, and a total separation of the sex activities of members of successive generations, expressed in the taboos limiting familiarity between mother and son, father and nubile daughter, father-in-law and daughter-in-law. In Christian thought it is the 'pure in heart' who 'see God' and this is interpreted by the mission Churches to imply monogamy. Only in the 'independent' African Churches is it asserted

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[1] The emphasis on looking, or concern in the mind, is absent.